

Guidance for Schools during the COVID-19 Outbreak

Latest Information

On March 13, 2020, Governor Inslee issued a [Proclamation on Statewide K-12 School Closures](#) that bans public school districts, charter schools, and private schools in all counties of the state of Washington from having in-person educational, recreational, and other K-12 school programs in their school facilities. This will remain in effect from March 17, 2020 until April 24, 2020. This ban may be extended.

This ban does not apply to:

- Using school facilities to provide childcare, nutrition programs, and other social services necessary to preserve and maintain life, health, property or the public peace.
- Providing support to students in order to meet course and credit requirements for high school graduation. The below guidance will help you respond to COVID-19 at your school facility if you provide essential childcare or nutrition programs.

Guidance

While schools are closed, all school districts have been tasked with creating a plan for the continuation or expansion of services like nutrition and childcare for students and families who need assistance. (See [Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction's guidance page](#) for more information.)

COVID-19 can quickly and easily spread in places where people gather in close contact. When planning for these services, social distancing measures should still be taken. In order to reduce the chances of spread when providing child care and food services to students, take the following precautions:

1. **Develop, or review, your school's emergency operations plan.** Review your strategies for reducing the spread of disease and establish mechanisms for ongoing communication with staff, students, volunteers, families, and the community. Collaborate with local health departments and other relevant partners.
2. It is advised that students, staff, parents and guardians, are excluded from sites if they are showing symptoms of COVID-19 or have been in contact with someone with COVID-19 in the last 14 days.
3. When possible, regular health checks (e.g., temperature and respiratory symptom screening on arrival at school) of students, staff, and visitors. Those who are symptomatic should be excluded. For students experiencing homelessness, use your current procedures to ensure their safety.

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4. Older adults and individuals with underlying medical conditions that are at increased risk of serious COVID-19 are encouraged not to come to the child care and food service setting (including employees).
5. As much as possible have staff and students stay six feet away from each other.
6. Provide adequate supplies for good hygiene, including clean and functional handwashing stations, soap, paper towels, and alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
7. Follow environmental cleaning guidelines from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) are followed (e.g., clean and disinfect high touch surfaces daily or more frequently).
8. Plan ways to care for students and staff who become sick and separate them from students and staff who are well. Use face masks as needed should this occur. Staff should go home immediately if they become sick. Contact the student's parent or guardian immediately if they show symptoms of COVID-19.

What can we do to prevent the spread of COVID-19 while providing child care?

Staff and students should:

- Stay home when they are sick.
- Wash their hands frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom, before eating, and after they blow their nose. Staff may need to help young children do the same.
- If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.
- Avoid touching their eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Cover coughs or sneezes with a tissue, then throwing the tissue in the trash and cleaning hands with soap and water or hand sanitizer (if soap and water are not readily available).
- Get a flu shot during flu season.

Consider how you set up your space.

- Identify strategies to increase space or limit contact between students and staff. For example, modify seating arrangements, find a larger venue, stagger schedules of staff and open times, and discourage students and staff from crowding while waiting for the bathroom or getting food.
- Prop doors open to avoid touching.
- Increase ventilation within the facility.
- Increase the number of hygiene stations, including hand sanitizer stations.
- Post signs showing can students and staff protect themselves.

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- [Stop the Spread of Germs Flyer \(CDC\) \(PDF\)](#) | [Spanish \(PDF\)](#) | [Simplified Chinese \(PDF\)](#) | [Vietnamese \(PDF\)](#)
- [Coronavirus Factsheet](#) (available in different languages)
- [COVID-19 Educational Materials in Several Languages](#)

Clean and disinfect classroom spaces

- Clean and disinfect high touch surfaces more frequently.
- Share [Classroom Cleaning - Tips for Teachers](#) with staff. (Note: This is a general resource, not COVID-19 specific.)
- Schools should follow standard procedures for cleaning with third party certified “green” cleaners and disinfecting with an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) registered disinfectant for use against the novel coronavirus - see [List N: Disinfectants for Use Against SARS-CoV-2](#). Typically, this means daily disinfecting surfaces and objects that are touched often, such as bathrooms, water coolers, desks, countertops, doorknobs, computer keyboards, hands-on learning items, faucet handles, phones and toys.
 - Disinfecting is the responsibility of school custodial staff. They are trained to use disinfectants in a safe and effective manner and to clean up potentially infectious materials and body fluid spills – blood, vomit, feces, and urine.
 - Contact your custodian or school nurse if a student becomes ill and your classroom needs cleaning and disinfection. Custodial staff should follow the disinfectant manufacturer’s instructions for use including:
 - Using the proper concentration of disinfectant
 - Allowing the required wet contact time
 - Paying close attention to hazard warnings and instructions for using personal protective items such as gloves and eye protection
 - Using disinfectants in a sufficiently ventilated space
- Schools and districts must have a Safety Data Sheet (SDS) for each chemical used in the school.

What can we do to prevent the spread of COVID-19 while providing food services?

See DOH’s [guidance for food workers](#).

More COVID-19 Information and Resources

Stay up-to-date on the [current COVID-19 situation in Washington](#), [Governor Inslee’s proclamations](#), [symptoms](#), [how it spreads](#), and [how and when people should get tested](#). See our [Frequently Asked Questions](#) for more information.

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The risk of COVID-19 is not connected to race, ethnicity or nationality. [Stigma will not help to fight the illness](#). Share accurate information with others to keep rumors and misinformation from spreading.

- [WA State Department of Health 2019 Novel Coronavirus Outbreak \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [WA State Coronavirus Response \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [Find Your Local Health Department or District](#)
- [CDC Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [Stigma Reduction Resources](#)

Have more questions about COVID-19? Call our hotline: **1-800-525-0127**. For interpretative services, **press #** when they answer and **say your language**. (Open from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m.) For questions about your own health, COVID-19 testing, or testing results, please contact your health care provider.

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